Editorial

Finding Focus
by Regina G. Walker, Executive Editor

Thank you to the Directorate of Force Development for a warm welcome into this new role. As Deputy, and now Director, I've had the privilege to become immersed in many issues affecting our Joint IO community. In serving this broad group of professionals in an executive role, I've gained even greater appreciation for the sheer scope of our mission. Among our primary duties is helping to define career paths for military and government IO practitioners. This is one of many jobs, in addition to being the home of this journal, which keeps our team fully engaged with the greater strategic communication (SC) and information operations worlds. One of the most notable challenges we encounter is scoping the sheer breadth of knowledge IO professionals require. We group a number of core capabilities into a doctrinally common place, yet recognize it's very difficult to harness experience and expertise in a single place—virtual or actual. Thus, we're keenly aware of the need to balance depth of specialization with breadth of general expertise.

I spent part of my career as an information technology professional, exploring complex systems, and helping develop a variety of applications and tools. Yet every team I've led knows my philosophy: we must constantly emphasize the need for balance between software and wetware; builders are only useful when their product fully serves the end user. Several branches of computer science such as artificial intelligence and visualization show great promise to assist IO/SC planners and analysts. So while we often enjoy spirited debates about the intricate differences between humans and machines, their respective needs will always be different, and ultimately the tools still serve the people. In our role as force developers, "people building"—training and education of our military and civilian personnel—will always be top priority.

There are many ways to share and expand professional knowledge and we're committed to providing you with the latest and most interesting examples. Our publication is here to express the broadest range of IO topics and interests, and I look forward to hearing your ideas on how we can best serve you.

— RGW

Carrying IO Outside the Bubble
by Craig L. Prichard, Major, USAF

While non-kinetic targeting is well understood to those involved in IO, the benefits of this approach to warfare must extend beyond contemporary operators if it hopes to achieve legitimate status as a core military competency. Those involved primarily in kinetic activities will undoubtedly find little utility in exploring second and third order effects, as long as mission objectives focus on physical destruction and tangible BDA. The challenge to those services that have not committed to an actual IO career force is to propagate the fundamental utility of IO, and recognize areas for application outside normal constructs. A three year tour in a command that concentrates on providing non-kinetic options to COCOMs is insufficient to gain a full appreciation for the nuances this sort of warfare demands. This is even more exaggerated when transiting between assignments, where feedback from specific actions is immediate and transparent.

A key link in bringing a holistic approach to tactical operations is the intelligence personnel who are admirably tasked with spanning both worlds on a daily basis. Those with exposure to IO must be adept at translating effects to those audiences where discussions beyond physical destruction and collateral damage are foreign subjects. On a plate already filled with estimates, priority requirements, and nodal analysis, bringing IO "outside the bubble" requires an aptitude in another capability frequently associated with information operations: strategic communication. Regardless of one's respective views on how SC fits into the overall context of operations, there is a concerted effort throughout DOD to improve efficiency and effectiveness of overarching themes and messages. This endeavor must be mirrored in the intelligence community to provide "transmission" experts capable of speaking to external audiences, or spectators raised on lethal approaches to warfare. The other vital networks necessary in the proliferation of IO's inherent potency are the transients.

Once removed from an environment where influence and perception management are part of the vernacular, it becomes increasingly difficult to articulate the value of non-lethal actions. Suggesting that a new Ensign in a Prowler squadron receive indoctrination on the five core capabilities outlined in JP 3-13, is both unrealistic and unreasonable. Yet with a cursory knowledge of OPSEC and EW, he/she has at least a couple pieces of the puzzle. An Air Tasking Order or target folder no longer represents a simplified version of the commander's intent, just as BDA is not a singularly inclusive measure of effectiveness. There are "takeaways" from every tour of duty, and as I head back to the USAF aviation community, I intend to broaden IO's exposure to a diverse, yet distinctive congregation. Armed with a modicum of fluency in SC, PSYOP, MILDEC, OPSEC, EW, and CNO, I feel well equipped to teach future generations of pilots and navigators that a "show of force" does more than disperse enemy personnel—and a JDAM drop leaves more than just a large crater in its wake. -- CLP

(Maj Prichard served JIOWC/J7 as Chief of the Training and Advocacy Divisions)